



SOLIHULL

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Serving Central Solihull, Olton and Hobs Moat
Communities

February 2022 Newsletter

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12



SOLIHULL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Based in the town centre, Solihull URC seeks to minister and witness to the local community, the wider town and the areas of Olton and Hobs Moat where we have formerly had a worshipping presence.

We share our mission with other Churches and are in partnership with others in the community. We invite you to join us as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

www.solihullurc.org.uk
www.centralsolihullchurches.org.uk

LEADERSHIP TEAM

VACANT - Minister

Gordon Justham - **Church Secretary & Elder**

Linda Faber - **Mission Enabler & Lettings Administration**

Maureen Butler - **Elder (worship & prayer, charities, social activities)**

Barrie Jones - **Elder (Property, Health & Safety)**

Elaine Jones - **Elder (Administration, Data protection, Catering)**

Jackie Justham - **Elder (charities, social activities)**

Ian Carnell – **Elder**

Howard Cotes – **Elder**

Gordon Laurie - **Elder**

Liz Amos - **Treasurer**

Areas of special responsibility are listed in brackets.

WORSHIP DURING FEBRUARY

It is good to be back in church. However due to the current infection rate in Solihull and the potential for further increases in cases, we ask that you adhere to the following Covid 19 restrictions even though these may be stricter than the law requires.

We recognise that many will have been double vaccinated (probably had the booster as well) but that doesn't, in itself, stop the spread of the disease. The Elders have decided that we should continue with some steps to mitigate the further spread of the virus. Basically this means:

- please sign in (either by using the NHS track and trace App or at the desk by the entrance)
- please use the hand sanitiser provided or wash your hands
- social distancing rules should be followed with no more than 6 people or 2 households grouping together indoors.
- Communal Singing: we have a large spacious building and as long as you are socially distanced and, ideally, wearing a mask then please feel free to sing along with the hymns.

We will continue, where possible, to offer the service via Zoom for those who are unable to get to Church or still feel uncomfortable about attending. It is also our intention to serve tea and coffee at the end of the service subject to having sufficient volunteers to prepare the drinks.

Gordon Justham

The Worship leaders for February are:

6th February	10:00am	Mr Gordon Justham (includes communion)
13th February	10:00am	Mrs Linda Faber
20th February	10:00am	Mr Blair Kesseler
27th February	10:00am	Mr Gordon Justham

THE LECTIONARY

Readings for Sundays in February from the Revised Common Lectionary are as follows. Please note that worship leaders are not obliged to follow the lectionary but you may be interested to know what the lectionary readings are for the specified Sundays. The readings in bold are the gospel readings for the day.

Gordon Justham

6th February Isaiah 6.1-8,(9-13); Psalm 138; 1 Corinthians 15.1-11;
Luke 5.1-11

13th February Jeremiah 17.5-10; Psalm 1; 1 Corinthians 15.12-20; **Luke 6.17-26**

20th February Genesis 45.3-11,15; Psalm 37.1-11,39-40; 1 Corinthians 15.35-38,42-50; **Luke 6.27-38**

27th February Exodus 34.29-35; Psalm 99; 2 Corinthians 3.12-4.2; **Luke 9.28-36, (37-43)**

FOREWORD - CANDLEMAS

After Christmas and the New Year what is on the horizon? Well on 2nd February, we celebrate Candlemas the Festival of Lights, an old festival dating back to Pre-Christian times when the increased strength of the sun was celebrated as Winter gave way to Spring.

Today it is recognised as a Christian holiday - a holy day, and celebrated in Christian churches as a Festival of Lights halfway between the shortest day and the Spring Equinox. It is also considered as being the end of the Christmas period and Epiphany which is why in many other countries Christmas decorations are not taken down until then and I know many people in our country who do the same.

Today, many Roman Catholic churches and others take the new candles they are going to use and have them blessed in the church and light new candles to celebrate the Light that has come into the world. The service commemorates the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple as a baby. Every Jewish mother had to take their baby to be presented to God 40 days after the birth and make an offering. It was a day of renewal, hope and purification for Mary as she presented Jesus in the Temple. The story of this is found in Luke's gospel where Mary and Joseph are met by Simeon and Anna, both very elderly people and both delighted to see Jesus and saw that he was special. Simeon said and knew that Jesus would be 'a light of revelation' and 'would bring glory to Israel'. Anna who spent her life in the temple praying, was able to praise God and speak about the 'redemption' Jesus would bring to those around her. I've always been encouraged how these two very old people were able to see a baby as the Light of the World and were used by God to make this known. We are all needed and used by God on our Christian journey no matter how old or how young.

It is often very difficult for us to see light in our world today with all that is happening and has happened but I am encouraged by the

newsletters I receive from MSF, Médecins Sans Frontières. Medical staff working in stricken areas of our world, a world of bombs, missiles and hunger treating patients and operating in conditions alien to our medical services. Here we see humane goodness shining out in horrible circumstances amongst all the suffering, and is not put out.

John writes of the goodness of Christ "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never put it out".

As we pass from the season of the birth of the Light of the World into the season of Lent and Easter, we enter a time of reflection of just how the helpless 'Babe of Bethlehem' established himself as the true Light of the World' and pray that our actions will convey this hope to as many people as we can.

May God bless us all on our Christian journey.

Irene Bound

URGENT REQUEST

We need volunteers for welcoming, flowers and coffee. The rota list is at the back of the church, if you are unable to attend Sunday Worship and would like to donate some flowers, please contact one of the elders. It is most important that we have people to welcome and to provide flowers on a weekly basis.

Elaine Jones

LENT GROUP

It has been suggested that there is enough interest to run a Lent Bible study once again this year. It has been proposed by the Elders that we run it on Zoom as it worked very well last year and might allow some who are still not mixing to be able to join in with something.

In the last few years, we have held such a group on a Tuesday morning and I propose that we do that again beginning the week after Shrove Tuesday which will be the 8th March. It will begin at 10am and will last about an hour each week. We will meet for 5 sessions finishing Tuesday 5th April. We have not selected any study material yet so if you have a suggestion, I would love to hear from you. Please let me have your name if you would like to join in so you can be sent the zoom invitation each week.

If there is a viable group who need to meet in an evening because of other commitments please contact me as we can look at running that too.

Linda Faber

FREEWILL OFFERING ENVELOPE SCHEME

The coronavirus has made us review many things that we have done previously year in year out. This scheme is one of them. In previous years in December worshippers have been issued with a set of envelopes one dated for every Sunday for the following year. The individuals would put their money into the envelopes and place them in the offertory on a Sunday.

However, as a society we are no longer using so much cash but instead are paying more and more by electronic means. At church we are not

passing around the offertory plate but instead we are asking people to put their offertory into a basket on entering the church. In addition, a number of worshippers currently attend church services on zoom so do not physically come to church. As a result, an increasing number of people are paying their offertory directly into the church bank account by way of a standing order. Consequently, the number of people utilising the scheme has dropped, to the extent that, the elders felt that it was not economically viable to justify the cost of purchasing envelopes for 2022.

Hopefully, everyone who has previously taken part in the scheme has been contacted. If not apologies. There are a number of ways that your offertory can be made. Payments can be made by standing order directly to the bank or by cheque. Alternatively, you can still place your money into the basket on entering the church. If there is anyone who still likes the discipline of being provided with an envelope for every Sunday then a homemade set of envelopes can be made available to you.

If you gift aid your offertory because you are a taxpayer then paying by standing order or by cheque means that the church will be able to record the payments that you have made and include them in any gift aid claim. For those of you who like modern technology the church will very shortly have a card reader to enable you to make your offertory electronically!

If you would like a set of envelopes or to pay by standing order or to gift aid your offertory then please have a word with one of the Elders or our church treasurer Liz Amos who can provide you with the necessary church bank account details.

Howard Cotes

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Sometimes it can seem like overseas mission work is for others and not for us. Maybe we have given over a week, or two, during our lives, to go abroad and join in with some kind of mission project, but more likely not. But here is something you might be able to do without going too far at all.

The commonwealth games is coming to Birmingham in 2022 and people will be here from all over the world and there is opportunity to share the Gospel with them. What they find out here they can take back home with them.

Good News for Everyone (formerly Gideons UK) are planning to make sure there is a copy of the New Testament within reach of every place that these visitors might be staying, by visiting all the hotels, guest houses and B&B's within Birmingham and surrounding areas.

They are also planning opportunities for personal evangelism when New Testaments will be given out directly to visitors and others.

I am going to a meeting in March to find out about what is planned and to see if there is any way that we might be able to assist in this unique opportunity. Keep praying for this event and the evangelistic opportunities that it will afford and think about whether you might be able to spare some time to become involved at a practical level too.

Linda Faber

SOLIHULL LINK

Solihull Link is the name that was settled on for what we have previously been calling the Breakfast Club. There were people who thought the name was too much like a soup kitchen and that it might attract more homeless people than we have here at present, and so it has been given a new name.

The project is, and was, never designed to be such, but is a contact point for those with housing issues and many related factors. Whilst they are here they can be fed too. We are hosting this project which will be run by Solihull Integrated Addiction Service, and, by the time you read this, should have just started having been delayed several times because of Covid and other matters. This project has also given us opportunity to discuss other ways that we might be able to support those who work with people with complex needs.

Please pray for the right opportunities to be recognised, and pursued, as we seek to keep our mission objectives and Kingdom Matters at the centre of all that we do.

Linda Faber

LEPROSY MISSION SERVICE SUNDAY 10TH JULY

Guy Willcock will be taking our church service on Sunday 10th July. He will speak to us about the wonderful work of the Leprosy Mission. Please keep the date free.

Janet Ince

DINING OUT LUNCH

Come and enjoy a leisurely lunch and a chat in our café style restaurant

on

8th FEBRUARY AT 12.30 pm

£3.50

ALL ARE WELCOME



MENU

FISH PIE

SEASONAL VEGETABLES

.....

FRUIT CRUMBLE AND CUSTARD

.....

TEA OR COFFEE



Please book by contacting Elaine 0121 744 6067 or email
vej46@yahoo.co.uk

By Thursday 3rd February



CHRISTIAN AID - AFGHANISTAN CRISIS APPEAL

‘People are Starving in Afghanistan, with more than 8 million on the brink of famine’.

The recent conflict and change of government, coupled with the worst drought in 27 years, have tipped the country over the edge into humanitarian crisis. Economic collapse has sent food prices soaring. Afghanistan’s health care system has reached the brink of collapse. Children are dying and a million more under the age of five are at risk of dying over the next three months.

Christian Aid's partners are on the ground scaling up their operations and are able to reach the people most in need. With your support, they and their local partners can:

- provide emergency food and nutrition support for children
- support healthcare facilities
- provide winter kits to help displaced families stay warm
- supply clean drinking water
- protect women and girls

I am pleased to be able to report that contributions to date have raised £402.00 plus an additional £50.00 through gift aid. There is still time to donate. There are envelopes available in Church. If you would like to make a donation and need this to be collected, please let me know.

Many thanks for all your support.

Myles Ensor

REFORM MAGAZINE

We currently have a number of subscribers for this magazine. It is described as follows:

“Reform is a fresh and challenging magazine exploring theology, ethics, personal spirituality and Christian perspectives on social and current affairs.

The magazine is for thinking people who enjoy reading about Christian ideas from a range of viewpoints. It features writing from journalists, academics, politicians, campaigners, scientists and religious leaders. As well as high-profile interviews, in-depth features and book, music and film reviews, Reform carries letters and a regular light-hearted column. The magazine is published 10 times a year by the United Reformed Church but has readers from all Christian denominations, as well as readers from other faiths and from no faith tradition.”

I am the contact for Solihull URC. I need to put in this year's order. If you would like to join our list of subscribers would you please let me know by no later than 14 February. My email address is howard@cotes.me.uk or alternatively give me a ring on 01676535692. So if you need something to read during lockdown here is your opportunity.

The cost is £29.50 pa which covers 10 issues. There is an alternative option should you wish. Instead of a paper copy you could have a digital copy by email in which case the cost would be £18 for 10 issues.

The paper copy of the magazine is sent to me and I arrange to distribute it to all subscribers. I look forward to hearing from you.

Howard Cotes



From Our Postbag – January 2022

A Happy New Year to all our supporters and our wonderful Kenyan children and students. As I have said in previous reports, reading through their letters reinforces my knowledge of how completely their lives have been changed because of EducAid Africa and people like yourselves. Here are young people, mostly from a background of abject poverty who have been able to lift themselves out of their situations by being provided with the education that they really deserve. Their influence on their families, villages and society as a whole will be so marked. For this they are truly grateful.

I am pleased that you have given me wings to fly to my destiny, that you care about me and remember me. I am saying a big thank you for what you have done for me. May the Lord repay you for what you have done.

Thank you once again for your kindness. You have made my dreams become valid. I know that I will make it. I am working extra hard. I am encouraged in moving on up the steps of my education life. This has been possible because of your steadfast support and amazing generosity. I really appreciate it and I hope that you will continue having such generous hearts. May God bless you for your charity work, I am happy that I have one term remaining before finishing my secondary education. I cannot forget that it is your support that has made me reach this far and I thank you for helping me with the school fees to continue my studies.

Coming to board at secondary school from small village primary schools is a huge change of lifestyle which is not always easy at first. Many have never been away from home before. However, they know that this experience and education will completely change their lives so they grasp this opportunity with both hands and work “their socks off” to enable them to succeed.

I am glad to inform you that I am carrying on well with my education despite facing a few challenges. This is due to the influence of interacting with students from different localities which has helped the change in my behaviours in school and maintain my grades. It has been a difficult choice to make while alone in school. Indeed, school life is interesting as I get informed and learn about right and wrong things that one is supposed or not supposed to do.

My timetable has slightly changed where in my free time I have included subjects that seem challenging to me whilst the other subjects are fixed during the morning and night preps hour. In my favourite subjects I try to do my best. Participating in different activities at school besides making me physically fit has also made me mentally fit as my thoughts are in school.

During my leisure time I am trying my best so that I do not allow that time to pass without doing something in my studies. Because of that I have prepared my personal timetable that guides me doing my revision.

The school weather has been changing and there have been rain and cold. Despite this weather I have got through it well. I have not been ill and thank God for that.

In my leisure time I also read story books and the Holy Bible so as not to be idle. In French we have learned more foreign things that we did not previously know.

Their school day is long, with almost all lessons being taught in English. In addition, the pupils contribute to the cleaning of the school and are responsible for washing their own clothes. Resources are very limited and EducAid Africa helps by providing sponsored pupils with appropriate revision materials and funding essential educational trips. Every sponsored 1st year pupil receives from us a set of uniform, mattress, writing material, a mosquito net and a calculator.

2021 and 2022 term dates have been altered because of the epidemic and their Term 2 ended on the 23rd December and Term 3 has already begun on the 3rd January and ends on the 4th March and their exams start on the 7th March and ends on 1st April.



May 2022 be healthy, safe and happy for you all and our very special Kenyan friends!

Ian Carnell

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IS A GLOBAL REALITY

At least 340 million Christians around the world experience systematic discrimination, unfair treatment and persecution. That means 1 in 8 Christians are affected by 'extreme', 'very high' or 'high' levels of persecution in 74 countries.

Open Doors assembles a list of the top 50 where there is the most extreme persecution and asks us to pray for them.

This month: Eritrea

Christians from non-traditional denominations face the harshest persecution in Eritrea, both from the government and from the Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC) - the only Christian denomination recognised by the government, controlled by those in power.

Government security forces monitor phone calls, scrutinise activity and conduct countless raids that target Christians, seize Christian materials and damage house churches. Christians can be arrested and imprisoned in appallingly inhumane conditions, without trial. Their loved ones often don't know if they are still alive.

Pray

- For believers in prison, and their families, to know God's provision.
- That church leaders would have wisdom to engage their government on the issue of religious freedom.
- That believers would remain steadfast in their faith

Linda Faber



World Day of Prayer 2022

4th March

International material prepared by England, Wales & Northern Ireland

CHURCHES TOGETHER IN CENTRAL SOLIHULL

ask you to please

join people around the world in prayer

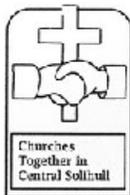
on Friday 4th March

at Solihull United Reformed Church.

Drop in between 10am—2.30pm

Parking off Union Road B91 3DH

**Informal individual prayer informed by
material presented in multiple prayer
stations.**



A very short service of led prayers
will be held at 12 noon to draw
together the themes of the day.

SPONSORED CHILD MARIAMA

It is time for us to send our annual contribution supporting Mariama and her community. I suggest £15 (think of it as £1.50 a month) but any amounts will be welcome. I shall wait until the end of March before sending whatever has come in. In the present circumstances I think targets are irrelevant.

For various reasons the information on the notice board has been rather erratic but I hope to do better this year. Thank you all for your support for this valuable work.

Anne Cherry

POSTAGE STAMPS

A few of our members collect the stamps from the letters etc which they receive. They then pass them to me and I send them off to an organisation which sells them around the world. A percentage of their income from this is passed to the RNIB. There is a box at the back of the church where you can leave stamps at any time. Please leave about 1cm of the envelope around each stamp. I will send them off 2 or 3 times a year. Thank you.

Alan Kembery

THANK YOU

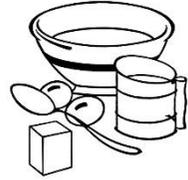
I would like to thank all the Elders, Liz Amos the Treasurer, and Linda for all their invaluable work over the last two years. They have kept our church and services going despite all the pandemic problems. Zoom services have been a life line to many more vulnerable people. Please remember them in your prayers and offer help when you can.

Janet Ince

FLAVOUR OF THE MONTH

Vegetarian Mushroom Pie

Serves 8



8oz/225g plain flour
6oz/175g butter
2tsp/10ml paprika
4oz/115g parmesan cheese grated
1 egg beaten with 1 tbs/15ml cold water
1 tbsp/15ml Dijon mustard

FOR THE FILLING

1oz/25g butter
1 Onion finely chopped
1-2 garlic cloves
12oz/350g mushrooms chopped
2 tsp/ 10ml mixed dried herbs
1 tbs/15ml chopped fresh parsley
2oz/50g fresh white breadcrumbs
Salt and freshly ground black pepper.

FOR THE CHEESE TOPPING

1oz/25g butter
1oz/25g plain flour
½ pint/300ml milk
1oz/25g Parmesan cheese grated
3oz/75g Cheddar cheese grated
¼ tsp/1.5ml English mustard powder
1 egg separated.

To make the pastry:- Sift the flour into a bowl and rub in the butter until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the paprika and the Parmesan cheese. Bind to a soft pliable dough with the egg and water. Knead until smooth, wrap in cling film and chill for 30 minutes. For the filling :- melt the butter and cook the onion until tender. Add the garlic and mushrooms and cook uncovered for 5 mins, stirring occasionally. Increase the heat and drive off any liquid in the pan. Remove from the heat and stir in the dried herbs, parsley, breadcrumbs and seasoning. Allow to cool.

Pre heat the oven to 190C/375/Gas 6. Put a baking tray in the oven. On a lightly floured surface roll out the pastry and line a 23cm/9 inch loose-based flan tin, pressing the pastry well into the edges and making a narrow rim around the top edge. Chill for 20 mins.

For the Cheese topping, melt the butter in a pan stir in the flour and cook for 2 mins. Gradually blend in the milk. Bring to the boil to thicken and simmer for a 2-3 mins. Remove from the heat, stir in the cheeses, mustard powder and egg yolk, season well. Whisk the egg white until it holds soft peaks, then using a metal spoon fold the egg white into the topping. To assemble the pie, spread the Dijon mustard evenly over the base of the flan case with a palette knife. Spoon the mushroom filling and level the surface by tapping the case firmly on the work surface. Pour over the cheese topping and bake the pie on the hot baking tray for 35-45 mins until the topping is set and golden. If you tap on the bottom of the flan case it should sound hollow. Serve at once or freeze until needed.

Elaine Jones

If you would like to contribute a recipe for the 'Flavour of the Month' item, please let Elaine or myself know. Thank you.

Stuart Mills

CHURCH GROWTH

Church growth doesn't just happen, it has to be actively pursued. I have told you of some matters that we should be paying attention to in this area before but here are some reminders and their current situation. Churches typically lose 10-15% of their membership each year through means of people moving away, dying or leaving for other reasons. So, for a church to grow you need to not just replace these people but add more as well. It has been shown that in order to make any church grow, the number of new visitors (those who come along for the first time) in each year, needs to be about the same as the number of the average congregation on Sundays. Some of these visitors will like what they see, and join the church, and some will never darken the doors again!

Our average Sunday congregation size during 2021 was 43 people (including people attending live worship and those joining in on Zoom) This is 9 lower than the average congregation size before the covid pandemic. That means for our church to replace those who left, and to grow further, we needed to have about 43 first time visitors during the year. It was a difficult year to invite people but visitors did come. But we only had 19 first time visitors not 43 or more. We are delighted that some of those have stuck with us, and joined in our church, but for our church to grow we need many more. In reality we have one fewer people associated with our church at the end of the year than we did at the beginning.

2022 offers us further new challenges. Covid is not going away. We are not waiting for 'normal life' to resume but we are God's hands and feet right now. He is building his church right now. What does that mean and how does that reflect itself in our church membership and Sunday worship attendance? We need to more than double our efforts to find ways to appropriately invite people to church. Can you invite people to special occasions like Mothering Sunday, Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, Father's day etc. Or what about people who might be open to coming along to a Sunday that isn't a special day? You don't have to know them well, get into the habit of inviting all sorts of people. You might find that only 1 in 20 people you ask comes along but there is more chance if you ask them than if you don't.

ECO CHURCH

A few months back my mother pointed out a quote from Ray Mears, a woodsman who regularly appears on television. He said, “We are a part of nature, not lords over it.” I know what he was trying to say, that we don’t have a right to use the natural world to destruction and that we should live in harmony with it. However that sentiment, of us having equality with the natural world, is contrary to Scripture. God did put us in charge of it, we are over and above all other created things. But God put us in the position to have responsibility towards it, to care for it and to tend it. Yes, as Ray Mears was trying to say, we have to change our way of thinking towards that natural world, it is not just there for us to exploit. But we have to come to realise that we have a responsibility towards it.

A good number of people have an intellectual understanding of that principle but how does that work out in our day to day lives? Do we buy new clothes because we fancy a change rather than actually needing some? Do we buy a gadget to do this or that single job when a general tool will do the job adequately? Do we buy battery operated drills or vacuum cleaners, which contain metals which are mined often without proper protection for the environment, rather than a version with a wire because it is easier to use? Putting in to practice what we know has many sacrificial implications.

I remember in the 1990’s walking into someone’s home that hadn’t been updated since the couple were married at the beginning of the 60’s. I remember thinking how it needed updating (but kept my thoughts to myself). As I got to know the couple, I discovered that this kind of behaviour was a choice. That they would not buy the latest thing, or have the latest look, but would give away the money they hadn’t spent to those who were in need around the world. What choices have we made that really impact the world and the people living in it?

Linda Faber

KEY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

Minister

VACANT

Church Secretary

Mr. Gordon Justham: 07540 289855 - 01564 776229 -
gordonjustham@talktalk.net

Website

www.solihullurc.org.uk

Hall Lettings: 07925 573259

Generations Project - enabling the Church in care homes

www.generationssolihull.org.uk generationssolihull@icloud.com

Moments

Mondays 10am—12 noon@ Central Solihull

MARCH 2022 NEWSLETTER

Material for the March 2022 edition

Is due to Stuart Mills: 07931 614393

stuartkmills@gmail.com

by Sunday 20th February please.